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# THE GANNETS OF BONAVENTURE

Upper left, a Gannet in the air. Lower left, the "Pierced Rock." Upper right, a flock of Gannets (note the second flock in the background). Lower right, flocks of Gannets on ledges on the face of the cliff. Photographs by Dr. Harold R. Peasley.

## IOWA BIRD STUDENTS ON VACATION

### BONAVENTURE ISLAND AND PERCE ROCK

On our recent trip through Eastern Canada and New England we visited the Colony of Gannets that nest on Bonaventure Island. This island is near the village of Percé, which is located on the southeast shore of the Gaspé Peninsula. Percé owes its name to the Pierced Rock which lies just off the shore. From our cabin on the mountain side we had a magnificent view of the picturesque village, the Pierced Rock and Bonaventure Island, rising out of the vast waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

At last the day to visit the Gannets had arrived and it was perfect. We were awakened by the White-throated Sparrows singing in the pines around our cabin. We dressed hurriedly by a crackling wood fire (the temperature had dropped to 40 degrees during the night) and were joined at breakfast by two couples from New York whom we met as we started the trip around the Gaspé Peninsula. They seemed to be traveling at about our speed and we often passed one another during the day. We also managed to spend our nights at the same cabin camps. We enjoyed these people and they too were interested in seeing and photographing the Gannets.

We soon found ourselves in an open craft starting the trip to Bonaventure Island. The island since 1919 has been primarily a Bird Sanctuary with a few farm families living there. We first circled the island, which is 6 miles in circumference and some 400 feet high. Several pairs of Black Guillemots were seen swimming near enough for us to get a good look at them. A few Great Black-backed Gulls were with the thousands of Herring Gulls on the Pierced Rock. The smaller rocks were covered with Double-crested Cormorants.

As we neared the south side of the island we saw almost perpendicular cliffs with ledges of varying widths completely covered with Gannets and their downy young. So closely do they sit together it gives one the impression of an entirely white cliff. Gannets were everywhere. The air and water was full of them. Suddenly the only pair of Razor-billed Auks we saw passed directly over our boat, giving us a splendid view of them. Forbush says: "The Razor-billed Auks possess much curiosity and the occupants of a boat passing near them can readily entice them to fly within a few yards by cheering and waving their hands." This was also our experience.

A short time later we landed on the island and started our mile and one-half walk to the Gannet colonies, the population of which was estimated at 20,000. It was a beautiful walk, mostly through pine woods, and more than once we found ourselves straying off the path to catch a glimpse of a rare Warbler or Golden-crowned Kinglet.

The Gannet is a large white bird. The head and hind neck are washed with pale yellow or straw color and the primaries are black. It has a wing spread of approximately 72 inches and measures 33 to 40½ inches in length and is one of the larger sea birds. It is a strong and expert flyer. It lives on fresh fish which it catches by plunging for them. According to Forbush, Gannets often dive from a height of about 100 feet and have been found in fishermen's nets which were set at a depth of 90 feet.

Bent tells us that at one time Gannets were killed in large numbers for codfish bait. They were beaten down with clubs as they tried to escape. As many as 540 of them were killed in an hour. The birds were roughly skinned and the flesh cut off in chunks. The one bluish-white egg is laid in a nest made chiefly of sea weed. The nests vary greatly in size and construc-



tion, and Forbush describes them as ranging from a bulky and well-made structure to practically no nest at all. They are placed close together on the ledges and summits of the rocks.

The Gannets are very noisy and keep up an incessant clacking which we found almost deafening at times. To Mr. Bent their harsh grating cries resemble the syllables "kurruck, krrrrruk." We found them very tame, although they are rather quarrelsome among themselves. By walking slowly we approached within a few feet. In fact, I held out my binoculars to a bird and it promptly grabbed it in its bill. Our guide had no difficulty in picking up a young bird, and had picked up the adults, he said. The young were in various stages of development when we saw them on August 17. Some we judged to be three weeks old and several were flying. We found a few eggs being incubated.

The entire day was spent walking from one colony to another and taking pictures. We never tired of watching the birds as they shuffled to the edge of the cliff where they literally seemed to fall off into space. Once on the wing, however, they were a thing of grace and beauty. We had seen six of the ten species of sea birds that nest on the islands. As we slowly retraced our steps everyone agreed it was worth the entire trip. It was a never-to-be-forgotten day.

Shortly after we had our first view of the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, we saw flocks of Common Eider Ducks and their young. These groups numbered from 75 to 150. Black-bellied Plovers were ever-present along the rocky shores of the river and an occasional flock of Ruddy Turnstones added much color. We were thrilled when we saw the first Great Black-backed Gull. By that evening we could count from 20 to 25 among the flocks of Herring Gulls perched on near-by rocks. We agreed with Peterson that even from a distance it is unmistakable.

Prince Edward Island will always be remembered for the many shore birds. On one small lake near Summerside we counted 40 Great Blue Herons.

We had a two-hour wait for our ferry which was taking us to Nova Scotia. While everyone was pacing about or playing cards, trying to pass the time, I had a ring-side seat on a nearby sand bar with hundreds of shore birds feeding on the receding tide. Semi-palmated Plovers, some 50 Dowitchers, Yellow-legs, Pectoral, Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers, Black-bellied and Piping Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones were there. As I hurried to catch the ferry another flock was just arriving and I'll always wonder what I missed.

Oh, yes, if you plan to visit the Gannets don't forget to take along a clothes pin for your nose. You'll need it!—MRS. HAROLD R. PEASLEY, Des Moines, Iowa.

#### CALIFORNIA AND THE WEST

On June 9, my wife and I left Grinnell, Iowa, for a trip through the west. At the start of the trip I decided to see how many different species of birds could be seen from the car window. Of course, many species of sparrows, hawks, and other dull-colored birds escaped identification, due to the fact that no marks of recognition could be seen in the short time they were in view.

The itinerary included a stop at Greeley, Colorado, and trips to Rocky Mountain National Park while there. Then we proceeded south through Denver, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Flagstaff, Las Vegas, and several weeks' visit in the Los Angeles area. On the journey homeward, Santa Barbara, San Francisco, Reno, Salt Lake City, Pocatello, Yellowstone National Park, Rapid City, Black Hills, Badlands, Sioux Falls, Spirit Lake and Charles City were cities

and parks through which we passed. We arrived back in Grinnell on July 17, after traveling 6,750 miles of highway and seeing 151 species of birds.

The trip was a little disappointing to me, in that I did not get a glimpse of a Road Runner; also, Swan Lake in Yellowstone Park failed to show me a Trumpeter Swan. Other birds that I thought I might see but did not were the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Cactus Wren, and a Ptarmigan. However, these few failures were greatly offset by the great number of species that I had never seen before, except in pictures or museums.

My first glimpse of a Magpie in Nebraska was exciting and fascinating. It is such a large black and white bird with a long sweeping tail. An immense heap of sticks, piled in small trees, constitutes its nest. Other thrills were the sight of my first Lark Bunting, in Colorado, and sharing lunch west of Berthoud Pass in the same state, with a Gray-headed Junco and a Rocky Mountain Jay. The jay came close enough to take pieces of bread from my hand, but the junco was not so brave. It was content to investigate the grates in the picnic stove and pick up crumbs under the table. Another exciting moment was the sight of several Brown-capped Rosy Finches in the snow on Trail Ridge Pass at an elevation of 12,183 feet. Getting out of the car, with field glasses in hand, I found, much to my disgust, that the finches had a great deal more energy at that high an elevation than I did, and therefore, they could hop faster than I could walk without becoming exhausted.

I played golf on several courses in the Los Angeles area, but I was more interested in the strange and varied music which came from the eucalyptus trees that lined the fairways. This was my first introduction to the Western Mockingbird. While in this area, I soon discovered that the Mockingbird did not get through with his repertoire of phrases in daytime, but sometimes burst forth in full song at ten or eleven o'clock at night. Behind the coast range in California, a Yellow-billed Magpie was very accommodating. It sat still beside the highway, picking at a piece of dead rabbit, as we slowed up to get a good view.

I had to go all the way to California and back to Idaho before I could put the official bird of Iowa, the common Goldfinch, on my list.

A Pine Siskin, near Old Faithful in Yellowstone, was busily engaged eating in a small pine, and he allowed me to approach close enough to it that I could have reached out and stroked it. The sight of three Clark's Nutcrackers, at Dunraven Pass in Yellowstone Park, caused me to stop for awhile. The sound of their harsh grating caw seemed very unusual and fascinating.

The number of the birds and the state in which they were first seen follows. Iowa, nos. 1-24; Nebraska, 25-34; Colorado, 35-57; New Mexico, 58-61; Arizona, 62-65; California, 66-91; Nevada, 92-95; Utah, 96-98; Idaho, 99-101; Wyoming, 102-124; South Dakota, 125-130; Iowa 131-151. Total species listed for the trip, 151.—E. A. KURTH, Grinnell, Iowa.

#### MAMMOTH CAVE, SMOKY MOUNTAINS, LAKE SUPERIOR

We enjoyed two trips this summer, neither of which returned much in the way of bird observation. In the matter of flora new to me the story is entirely different, and my observation of new trees, shrubs, and flowering plants was more than satisfactory.

Our first trip was into the Southeast in which, among other places, we visited Mammoth Cave National Park and Great Smokies National Park. Heat was our great obstacle on this trip, but the mountain ranges of the Appalachian system did yield much in the way of beautiful scenery, and the Great Smokies did yield two bird observations that are of some interest.

There each morning we awoke at the crack of dawn to the tuneful and persistent song of the wood thrush. He would sing continuously for three hours, and his song consisted of four phrases which he sang over and over again for the first two hours. During the last hour he often omitted the last phrase. The first phrase is the most musical and the most bell-like; the second two are higher pitched and still musical; but the last phrase is distinctly raucous. The other observation was of a Red-eyed Vireo which came within three feet of me and calmly surveyed me for at least a full minute.

This trip occurred during the last week in June and the first week in July. Our other trip occurred during the last two weeks in August and included a sojourn on the north shore of Lake Superior and a visit to Isle Royale National Park. To the latter place we were accompanied by three Iowa Ornithologists' Union members, Misses Marjorie Brunner, Emily Steffen, and Iola Tillapaugh. For those readers who are also fishermen I might remark that we saw a few 30-pound trout brought in and many more of lesser size. On the island we also saw a cow moose with twin calves. Our bird observations on the island consisted only of Canada Jays, Herring Gulls and Chickadees. Later, on North Shore, I saw Loons and Cedar Waxwings. We experienced five days of fog on Isle Royale and rather cold weather on North Shore, really about six-blanket weather. Had we had another blanket we would have made it seven!—E. W. STEFFEN, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

#### MONTANA

When Saunders wrote his book on the Birds of Montana, he had done little work in the extreme eastern part of the state. I wrote him that I expected to visit that area this year, and he was much interested and said that he would like to see my list of birds. About June 10 I took to the road, with my car and sleeping bag. I drove all night and was in Montana the next noon: would have reached it sooner but had two flat tires enroute. I had a grand trip, roaming around the back roads of eastern Montana. I visited Wilfred Crabb at Medicine Lake Refuge and together we went out and found Baird's Sparrow. I also enjoyed meeting Brewer's Sparrow for the first time; this was worth the whole trip. I established the fact that Eastern Bluebirds and Field Sparrows do summer in Montana. I also found Western Tanagers near the border of the two Dakotas, and made numerous other interesting records.—WM. YOUNG WORTH, Sioux City, Iowa.

#### NORTH CAROLINA, NEW JERSEY

We went to North Carolina to visit our daughter and family; left Ames August 1, stayed in North Carolina 12 days, then went northeast as far as southern New Jersey, where Mrs. Hendrickson has some ancestors buried whose graves we haven't found on previous trips. Then we went to State College, Pennsylvania, and visited a day with Logan Bennett and family. From there we went to eastern Ohio, where son Bob and I kicked down some more young trees and pulled much poison ivy in more graveyards while Mrs. Hendrickson read the inscriptions; we photographed the ones she selected as those of her ancestors. She even came across a "living ancestor," 88 years old, who told us many interesting things. The weather was cool and not too rainy all the month we were south and east.—GEORGE O. HENDRICKSON, Ames, Iowa.

#### ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

In July Miss Thelma Carmichael, my husband and I, took an auto trip through Rocky Mountain National Park. Enroute we saw 83 different birds



and failed to identify as many more. We identified these species in Colorado: Yellow-headed Blackbird, Mountain Bluebird, Sandhill Crane, Cassin's Purple Finch, Western Flycatcher, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Bonaparte's, Franklin's, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Rocky Mountain and Long-crested Jays, Western Kingbird, Magpie, Western Mockingbird, Howell's Nighthawk, Hooded and Scott's Oriole, Raven, Western Tanager, Water Ouzel, White-throated Swift.—MRS. W. G. MAC MARTIN, Tama, Iowa.

#### UTAH'S BEAR RIVER BIRD REFUGE

During the first part of July, Dr. and Mrs. Peter P. Laude and I visited the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, near Brigham, Utah. We found it to be an ornithologist's and bird photographer's paradise. Although all sections of the 64,000-acre refuge are not open to visitors, one may drive for several miles over its roads and observe from the car hundreds of birds in the marsh and lake areas, and along the mud and sand flats that are adjacent to the road. There we made some interesting observations and added a number of species to our life lists. Included were: Treganza's Heron, Brewster's Egret, White-faced Glossy Ibis, Cinnamon Teal and Black-necked Stilt. In addition, we saw about 500 Marbled Godwits, several hundred Avocets and other shore birds, many ducks, Canada Geese, California Gulls, Forster's Terns, and White Pelicans. Some of the young Western Grebes were not too large to ride on their mothers' backs. Long-billed Curlews were feeding in the open fields outside the refuge. We saw about 65 out of a possible 70 species that are found there during the summer.—LILLIAN SERBOUSEK, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

#### WESTERN UNITED STATES

We left Tucson the first week of May and had a wonderful summer. On our way north we spent some time at Grand Canyon, Zion and Bryce Canyons, and then visited Salt Lake City, Jackson Hole, Teton Mountains, Yellowstone Park and Glacier National Park. New birds seen were: Sage Hens near Jackson Hole, Calliope Hummers in the Tetons, Gray Ruffed Grouse in Yellowstone; also saw Trumpeter Swans and Sandhill Cranes but we had seen them before. We heard the swans give their trumpeting call and heard the cranes call. The Franklin's Grouse was a new bird to us, and we found many Pink-sided Juncos in Yellowstone. The Ospreys and Pelicans there were most interesting, and we took a picture of the nest and young of the Osprey on the so-called "Eagle Nest Rock" near Mammoth Hot Springs, beside the Gardiner River. Ospreys were nesting on that same rock when Yellowstone was first explored. Before reaching Glacier Park we saw many Chestnut-collared Longspurs along the road. Red-breasted Nuthatches were common there. Near Helena we saw Catbirds. We enjoyed getting near enough for good pictures of moose, antelope and bear in Yellowstone. Flowers were gorgeous in the Tetons, Yellowstone and Glacier. Trout fishing was very good, so what more could we ask?—MRS. ROSS J. THORNBURG, Tucson, Arizona (formerly Des Moines, Iowa).

#### YELLOWSTONE AND THE TETONS

Jean and I virtually had a field trip two weeks long on our summer vacation to Yellowstone and the Teton area. Leaving Cedar Rapids the end of July, we drove across South Dakota and spent a day in the Black Hills where the Mt. Rushmore memorial was mighty impressive.

As we went west, the first Arkansas Kingbird was seen about 50 miles west of Sioux City, near Yankton, South Dakota. Many ducks, the common shore birds and Black-crowned Night Herons were seen on the small lakes along the road in South Dakota north of Yankton.

In the Black Hills the first Mountain Bluebirds and Red-shafted Flickers were seen. Crossing Wyoming we stopped three times to watch flocks of Prairie Sharp-tailed Grouse, and we also flushed one flock of Sage Hens. On the sage lands west of Newcastle, Wyoming, we found a pair of prong-horned antelopes and we were lucky enough to get some pictures of them. A short side trip was taken to Devils Tower National Monument both to see that tremendous piece of rock and the prairie dog village at its base. No Burrowing Owls were seen, however, nor was the Duck Hawk seen which was supposed to nest on the perpendicular walls of Devils Tower; but, Lewis's Woodpecker was observed.

Going through the Big Horns and Ten Sleep canyon will be long remembered as well as a brook-trout breakfast at South Fork Inn which fellow Cedar Rapids vacationers there provided.

At Cody, of course, was the Shoshone dam and canyon, and we entered Yellowstone by the East entrance, making our headquarters at Lake Lodge. The bears seemed almost trained to greet the visitors on their entrance to the park; but the real greeting the first morning was from three bull moose—tremendous ones—who posed long enough for pictures.

To tell the truth, we had planned to spend most of our time in the Tetons, but Yellowstone proved to be so interesting we spent five days there, a perfect playground for nature lovers. We visited the geyser and hot spring phenomena, we hiked to Grebe Lake, the home of two pair of Trumpeter Swans, and we took some movies of them. We delighted in the views of Yellowstone Canyon and Falls, we crawled to the edge of the south rim of the canyon to take pictures of an Osprey nest. We saw Western Tanagers, Clark's Nutcrackers and Ravens, we saw more Trumpeter Swans on Swan Lake, Pelicans, deer, elk, moose and bear; also, four Sandhill Cranes. We enjoyed the ranger-naturalist campfire talks, the several museums, the wild flowers, particularly the fringed gentians, and the Indian paintbrush. And of course, had we gone fishing, the trout were biting as they seldom had before.

Reluctantly we said goodbye to the park and started for the Grand Tetons, that magnificent range of mountains a short distance south of the park. There we stayed at Moran, Wyoming, on Jackson Lake with the painted backdrop of the Teton range. It was another gorgeous area, and in this grand country we visited a great naturalist and ornithologist, Dr. Olaus J. Murie, who lives at Moose, Wyoming.

All too soon we had to leave the mountain coolness for Iowa heat, but another long field trip lay ahead. And on the way home coming down the Wind River Canyon we climbed to the top of a dry butte where two Prairie Falcons were soaring and diving, dropping their prey and then diving, turning and recovering it. Home now, Jean and I both wish we had been gone three instead of two weeks.—ROBERT F. VANE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

#### YELLOWSTONE PARK

My wife and I went on an 11-day western trip, July 31 to August 10, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. K. B. Harrington, of Winthrop. We drove to Yellowstone National Park, by way of the Badlands, Black Hills and Devils Tower National Monument. Our first new bird was the Western (Arkansas) Kingbird, seen in eastern South Dakota. The Magpie was seen in the Badlands, and later, in Wyoming, we occasionally saw flocks of a dozen or more of these beautiful and very conspicuous birds. I also found the Rock Wren in the Badlands. Our stay in the Black Hills was very brief, as we had covered them pretty thoroughly on a trip in a previous year, and we were anxious to



be on our way. We drove to Mount Rushmore and admired the huge man-made monument, and later viewed it from many angles on the scenic road up Iron Mountain.

We crossed the Big Horn Mountains from Buffalo to Ten Sleep, and very much enjoyed the trip through beautiful Ten Sleep Canyon, a drive that will be much less thrilling in the future when the proposed three-lane, gradual-incline highway on the opposite wall of the canyon is completed. As we crossed Wyoming we saw Lark Bunting, Lewis's Woodpecker, Prairie Falcon, Sage Thrasher, Desert Horned Lark and various other birds.

We entered Yellowstone Park through the Cody gate, a trip which includes driving through picturesque Shoshone Canyon. We enjoyed the wonders of Yellowstone, with its hundreds of geysers and hot springs, its beautiful mountains, lakes and vast timbered areas, and best of all, its cold, crisp mountain air. We thought the grandest and most awe-inspiring spectacle of all was the Lower Falls and Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. From Artist Point we saw the nest of young Ospreys perched upon a lofty pinnacle of rock (the nest that Dr. Vane photographed). In Yellowstone we were entertained by the very tame Ravens, White Pelicans and California Gulls at Fishing Bridge. There were Audubon's Warbler, Mountain Bluebird, Pink-sided Junco, Western Tanager, Red-shafted Flicker, Mountain Chickadee, Violet-green Swallow, Cassin's Purple Finch and numerous others to be seen. One morning I spent an hour or two in the hills behind Old Faithful trying to find a Williamson's Sapsucker. I heard his call many times, a "whee-yeer," at a little distance, but when I came nearer I neither saw nor heard him, and I never did get a look at the bird. At one point on this hike a large black bear was surprised in the undergrowth. He looked at me inquiringly, grunted a little, and ambled off a few yards ahead of me—adding a western touch not found on bird trips in Iowa!

We left the park through the south gate, then drove beside the beautiful Teton Mountains for many miles. After that we passed through the famous Jackson Hole country, and stayed overnight at Jackson, Wyoming, a very interesting wide-open town that is advertised as "the last frontier of the Old West." We came home by way of Denver, Lincoln and Omaha, adding Brewer's Blackbird, Sharp-tailed Grouse and Franklin's Gull along the road. On our last night on the road we stayed with Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Jones, in the Ledges State Park, Boone. On the other nights we occupied tourist cabins and the Government-owned cabins in Yellowstone Park. Like the Vanes, we could not wish for a better vacation, but a longer one!—FRED J. PIERCE.

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## PRESENT STATUS OF THE UPLAND PLOVER IN THE UPPER MISSOURI VALLEY

By WILLIAM YOUNGWORTH

SIOUX CITY, IOWA

During the spring and summer of 1947, the writer had ample opportunity to observe the status of the Upland Plover in the above mentioned area and has herewith set down a few observations.

The Upland Plover is a bird of the prairies and is usually associated with water, although not in all cases. However, we usually find them in the prairie grass near some slough, lake or in a pasture or hayfield with a small stream coursing through or near it. The spring of 1947 was unusually wet and rather

cool, and the result was pools of water in areas where none had been for several years. A heavier growth of grass was found in many areas. These factors caused Upland Plovers to come back to areas from which they had been gone for some years, and would make the casual observer think that the plover population was on the increase. However, the writer believes it was a thinning out of more populated nesting areas, with conditions that were nearly ideal for nesting elsewhere, that caused these birds to seek the old nesting haunts.

The first record for the season, on May 4, was two plovers near Norden, Keyapaha County, Nebraska. From that time on they were seen almost daily on the Ainsworth Army Air Base, Brown County, Nebraska. We usually saw one or two pairs around the Air Base. On May 10, I saw a pair of plovers near Plainview, Pierce County, Nebraska. The main flight seemed to arrive the following week and we saw several pairs along the Elkhorn River near Inman, Holt County, Nebraska. On an all-day trip made on May 25, from Atkinson to Swan Lake, Holt County, Nebraska, we counted 15 pairs and several single birds. Crossing into Garfield County to the south, we counted seven pairs of plovers and several singles before reaching the town of Burwell. Returning northward, we saw three pairs of plovers south of the town of Bassett, Rock County. On May 29, while making a trip to Sioux City, we saw two pairs of plovers east of Bassett, eight pairs near Newport, Rock County, 10 pairs near Stuart, Holt County, and two pairs near Plainview, Pierce county. Most of the above records were made somewhere near water, however, on June 7, we saw a pair of plovers near Orchard, Antelope County, in the high prairie country. On June 10, a pair of plovers was seen near Tabor, Bon Homme County, South Dakota, and two pairs along Emanuel Creek northwest of Tyndall in the same county. No more plovers were seen while crossing South Dakota, and several days spent in eastern Montana failed to reveal any Upland Plovers, although two Montana biologists told me a few pairs were still found locally in such areas as around Medicine and Bowdoin Lakes. On the return trip, while coming down through eastern South Dakota, along the James River bottoms, I found two pairs of plovers near Freeman, Hutchinson County, and saw two more plovers near Meckling, Clay County. I haven't seen summer resident plovers in the Clay County area in many years. On July 5, we saw a pair of Upland Plovers near Marshall, Lyon County, Minnesota. This latter record is really in the Mississippi Valley, but is so close to the Upper Missouri Valley watershed, that it is included for that reason.

It is quite apparent to the writer that with favorable nesting conditions, this species has a tendency to spread out its breeding range to include former nesting areas, but that on the whole the species is slowly losing out in numbers in most places except in the extremely favorable sandhill regions of Nebraska. It is in this area that we can still find Long-billed Curlew, Avocet, Marbled Godwit and Willet locally common in very small isolated areas. The harvesting of blue grass seed has suddenly bloomed into a million-dollar crop in the Nebraska sandhills, and with it come more hazards for our already harassed plover, along with burning, plowing up virgin land, and over-pasturing. It will be a question how long our larger waders can even hold out in their Nebraska sandhill hideaway.

## THE BOB-WHITE WHISTLES

By ED HEUSER

LUBUQUE, IOWA

I believe that most bird lovers find an extra delight in those experiences with winged life which have about them a special flavor of the eternal unity.

On this occasion I had been enjoying a summer afternoon stroll over a bit of green pastureland bordering the Mississippi a little south of Dubuque.

The lovely scene of river, hills, and trees was enhanced by a spotless blue summer afternoon sky. Shellbark hickories scattered shady spots over the tall growing grass, and there were yellow clumps of St. Johnswort in full bloom here and there.

I sat on a stump to fully enjoy the picture. After a while, out of the comparative silence of bird tunes more or less distant, there came sudden and clear, the whistle of a Bob-white.

For me there is an exceptional beauty and sweetness in a Bob-white's whistle. That began in my young boyhood when on early summer mornings the Bob-white whistled down from the hill into my bedroom window.

So now we whistled back and forth while I contemplated seeing him again, that experience not having happened to me for some time. Presently I noticed the Bob-white's whistle growing fainter as though he was retreating through the high grass. I continued to answer and soon the call became very faint. I estimated he had about reached the cornfield some 150 yards distant. Not wishing to miss a glimpse of him, I got up to follow. I had taken but three or four steps when to my surprise and astonishment the bird flushed not more than twenty feet away and, bob-whiting in quick succession, settled on a nearby wire.

Only an outdoor lover full of glorious anticipations could have enjoyed in full the thrill of that experience. The Bob-white, seeing me and hearing



BOB-WHITES

From a drawing by E. W. Steffen



me, had been stalking me for his own observation purposes, and with nature's instinct had successfully carried on the deception. The bird allowed fairly close study before flying again, leaving me with some unusual joys that seemed to have to do with eternal things, and which to an appreciable extent have remained with me.

## INFORMAL "CONVENTION" AT WINTHROP INDICATES NEED FOR REGULAR FALL MEETINGS

We have often heard our members say that they would like a fall meeting. It has even been suggested that we hold two meetings a year—one in May consisting entirely of outdoor bird trips, and the other in the fall when there would be the usual indoor presentation of papers, the ornithologists' banquet, etc. Planning and holding one convention a year is a big undertaking, requiring the work of many persons, and the fall meeting, while often talked about, has never materialized.

Editor Pierce and his wife were talking about this at the breakfast table one September morning, the former mentioning that he would like a fall meeting of the Union, and would even like to have a group of members meet at his home, if that were possible. Mrs. Pierce said, "Why not?" That settled the matter. Plans were quickly made for an "ornithological get-together" at the Pierce home—without consulting any of the officers of the Union or asking advice from anyone. Thirty personal invitations were sent, and with each was a request to relay the invitation along to any others who might be interested (this multiplied the invitation at least three or four times). Sunday, September 21, 1947, was the day named, and an afternoon and evening of informal visiting and a reunion of old friends was all that was promised.

The response was immediate and gratifying. Everyone seemed ready for just such a meeting. September 21 was clear and cool, with perfect weather conditions. The first guests arrived early and by mid-afternoon nearly 60 had assembled. Some of them drove a considerable distance to attend. The afternoon was spent in visiting, in browsing among the books in the bookshop and in the larger collection in the Pierce home, and some short field trips were taken along Buffalo Creek, which flows through the Pierce farm. Lunch was served by Mrs. Pierce at six o'clock. In the evening President Charles C. Ayres, Jr., gave an illustrated talk, using color films showing flood scenes at Ottumwa and bird and nature subjects taken in Iowa and on the West Coast. This finished a delightful evening and most of the guests departed about 9:30.

It was a most successful party. With so many of our officers and members present, it was very much like a little convention of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. The informality of the entire affair made it unusual and thoroughly enjoyable. A number of people remarked that it was like a big family reunion. At any rate, it clearly showed that our Iowa people like parties of this sort and welcome the chance to meet bird friends. It may also indicate that a fall meeting of the Union could be very successful. We have already heard people ask: "Are we going to Winthrop again next fall?" Mrs. Pierce says, "Why not?"

—F. J. P.

**Attendance Register**—BOONE, Barbara Jones, Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Jones; CEDAR FALLS, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Dix, Dr. and Mrs. Martin Grant, Jean Grant, Lois Conchita Grant, Mrs. Eugene Smith, Mrs. F. M. Stevens; CEDAR RAPIDS, Dorothy and Marjorie Brunner, Margaret Lahr, Lillian Serbousek, Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Steffen, Iola Tillapaugh, Dr. and Mrs. Robert Vane, Myra Willis; DES MOINES, Mrs. Jos. Chamberlain, Mrs. Janet DuMont, Mrs. H. R. Peasley; DUBUQUE, F. E. Crossley, Mr. and Mrs. George Crossley, Henry Herrmann, Ival Schuster, Mary H. Young; INDEPENDENCE, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Bly, Bob Cornwell, Randall Evanson, Gladys Shay, Timmy Van Ree; IOWA CITY, Dr. and Mrs. P. P. Laude; MT. VERNON, David Ennis, Dr. and Mrs. Harold Ennis; OTTUMWA, Chas. C. Ayres, Jr., Chas. C. Ayres, Sr., Marietta Eighme, Pearle Walker; WATERLOO, Lucile and Myra Loban, Dr. C. W. Robertson, Katherine Young; WINTHROP, Mrs. Minnie Campbell, Marjorie Jones, Florence Pierce, Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Pierce, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Pierce, Paul Pierce. Total registered, 57.

## THE FALL PARADE

By MRS. W. C. DE LONG

LAMONI, IOWA

(With drawings by E. W. Steffen)

When I moved to the prairie town of Clarion in north central Iowa and saw acres and acres of corn and oats surrounding me with no timber or river within walking distance, I supposed my observation of the migrating birds would be ended. What a surprise I was in for!

I have discovered that in the spring and fall of the year when the migration season is on, if a storm with rain develops in the early hours of the morning, migrating birds come down in great numbers, and because there isn't much timber over this central prairie belt, they find shelter in the town and are thus concentrated within a small area where one can see them.

The year 1946 was the first time I ever saw such a wave of migrating birds in the fall, as warblers, vireos, and flycatchers. On September 7, in the early hours of the morning long before daylight, I could hear the twitter of birds in the trees outside my bedroom window. I could hardly wait for daylight to come, for on August 28 a similar storm had forced birds down, and when daylight came, eight Pine Warblers, yellow-breasted birds with white wing bars, were seen in the spruce trees. What birds now were outside my window? About seven o'clock I looked out the window and saw that the box elder tree was full of little birds. It was very cloudy and visibility was poor, but a Blue-headed Vireo with a bluish head, white



BLUE-HEADED VIREO

throat, and white ring around his eye came near enough to the window for me to see him. He snatched a worm from the branch of the box elder and had his breakfast.

Down in the kitchen, cucumber pickles which had been standing in salt water over night were begging to be canned, plum pulp had to be run through a colander, a crate of peaches was on the floor, breakfast had to be put on the table, and migrating birds had chosen this day to stop in my yard.

The spring on the screen door was released from its hook and stood ajar so I could dash down the steps and look out the back door occasionally. There were times when there would be no life at all in the trees, and then again the birds came from every direction and swarmed down.



BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER

A large box elder tree stands in the middle of the back yard with branches hanging far down near the window. To the south of this tree there are shrubs that form a semi-circle, such as sumac, lilacs, mock orange, dogwoods, plum thicket, grapes, raspberries, walnut tree, and more dogwood.

From one bush to the other the warblers danced. The Black and White Creepers were most numerous, going up and down the trunk of the walnut and box elder trees. A Magnolia, looking very different from the gorgeous male I saw in the same tree this spring, was dancing in the plum thicket. His breast was very yellow with only a few black stripings on the flanks, but I knew it was a Magnolia because his tail was crossed midway by a broad white band.

The Blue-headed Vireo in the walnut tree found a fuzzy caterpillar and he shook it and shook it. I wondered how he was going to manage to swallow it. I knew the plum jam on the stove should be stirred, but at the moment I was too interested watching the vireo shake the caterpillar. Another vireo came and sat near him. This one had a very yellow throat and breast, yellow ring around his eye and wing bars. Never had I seen a Yellow-throated Vireo before, and this was no time to be stirring plum jam. The Blue-headed Vireo must have been worried for fear the Yellow-throated Vireo would take the caterpillar away from him, for he moved to a lower branch and took the worm with him. I rushed up the steps and rescued the plum jam just in time to save it from scorching.

I parted the curtains of the window by the sink so I could keep track of what was going on in the dogwood bushes while I washed the pint jars for the plum jam. Two Red-eyed Vireos were in the dogwoods eating the white berries. A Catbird and Brown Thrasher were competing with the vireos for the white berries.



A bright orange and black bird appeared in the walnut tree and gave an abbreviated form of his whistle—Baltimore Oriole it was who had stopped on his way to Central America where he will no doubt spend the winter among the banana plantations. Lady Baltimore was with him and she liked the white worms she found on the outside hull of the walnuts.

In the afternoon, with the back door as my observation point, I watched the parade go by. I imagined the warblers, vireos, and flycatchers the floats in the parade. There were so many pretty ones to see and such a short time to see them as they rushed by so quickly. There was a Chestnut-sided Warbler in his fall colors—greenish above, white below, two wing-bars and a white eye-ring, a Wilson Warbler with a jaunty black cap and an eye that makes one think of a black bead, the Tennessee Warbler, Warbling Vireo, Olive-backed thrush, a mother Grosbeak and flycatchers.

The flycatchers, dashing after winged insects, looked much alike except for size. I heard a little song, "Pee-a-wee," so I knew there was a Wood Pewee among them. The Least Flycatcher was not hard to distinguish, for he was much the same size as some of the warblers. Whether the others were Acadian or Alder was hard to tell, for they made no sound. The tiniest float of all was a hummingbird. He perched on a twig for a few minutes so I could view his ruby throat.

In the late afternoon, a cold drizzly rain descended. In the evening between five and six I again watched them. A beautiful male Black-throated Green Warbler with all his gorgeous spring colors came down low to a branch close to the door. A rift in the clouds threw a shaft of sunlight upon the orange throat of a Blackburnian Warbler.

From the raspberry and lilac bushes out stepped an Oven-bird looking first to the right and then to the left as though danger lurked behind every



BALTIMORE ORIOLE



OLIVE-BACKED THRUSH

bush and corner. He kept advancing toward me, tipping his orange striped crown as he walked on pink feet. Out stepped another Oven-bird and for the next half hour I watched the two mince their way back and forth on the lawn.

"To the forest—to the leaf buds  
Comes the tiny oven builder.  
Daintily the leaves he tiptoes  
Underneath them builds his oven."

Twilight descended, the screen door was fastened, the parade was over. In the morning they were gone.

### GENERAL NOTES

**Migrant Shrike.**—While walking along a country road near Hardy, Humboldt County, on July 25, 1947, I came upon a lone mulberry tree near a railroad track. I saw two Migrant Shrikes in the tree, and about 6 feet from the ground in the half-dead trunk I found a rather bulky nest made of twigs, grasses and feathers. In the nest was the skeleton of a dead baby bird. I saw the shrikes quite often after that, sitting on telephone wires, and heard their harsh call notes.—DENNIS CARTER, Thor, Iowa.

**Agelaius phoeniceus in Scott County.**—Some question has been raised by local ornithologists as to what form of Red-winged Blackbird occurs in this area. I wish to place on record a specimen of *Agelaius phoeniceus phoeniceus* which I found dead on May 13, 1947, adjacent to Duck Creek, Davenport, Iowa. The measurements compare with those of DuMont (Revised List of the Birds of Iowa, 1934). It was a male in good plumage. This brings to mind the fact that very little is known of the distribution and status of the Eastern, Thick-billed, and Giant Red-winged Blackbirds in Iowa. Extensive collecting would shed a great deal of light on this problem.—JAMES HODGES, Davenport, Iowa.

**Notes on Woodcock and Pileated Woodpecker.**—On August 12, 1947, in White Pine Hollow, Dubuque County, I flushed a Woodcock. It was in the deep woods, near a small spring brook that meandered through tall vegetation and rather soggy silt and forest mold. This was my first record for the bird in Iowa.

I noted the report on the Pileated Woodpecker in Clinton County in the June issue. I have observed this big fellow in Jones County, along the Maquoketa River. This species was a resident in White Pine Hollow for a number of years. On several successive visits to the Hollow over a period of years, I seldom failed to see or hear the birds; but on three or four visits, during the last three years, I have not found them. Near the town of Orchard, on the Cedar River, I watched a nest of Pileated Woodpeckers for a week while camped within a few yards of their tree in July, 1923. The nesting hole was about 4 to 5 inches in diameter and 16 to 20 feet from the ground, in a big hackberry stub. There were three very active young in the nest and the parent birds were exceedingly busy all week, feeding those fellows and removing excreta from the nest. So far as I could observe, they never dropped the "sweepings" near the nest, but always headed straight across the river upon emergence from the nest.—REV. ALBERT E. COE, Dysart, Iowa.

**Another Carolina Wren Record from Sioux City.**—It was shortly after five o'clock on the morning of August 26, 1947, that we first heard the loud, cheerful call of a Carolina Wren. We had the pleasure of seeing the visitor several times and hearing it until late in the afternoon. Unlike the Carolina Wren we reported last year, which stayed around the neighborhood for several days, this bird was not heard again after the first day. It is interesting to note that the call of this species is very similar to the song of the Kentucky Warbler. I believe that in some cases the songs are so nearly alike, a good look at the songster would make identification more certain.—WM. YOUNGWORTH, Sioux City, Iowa.

**Bird Mortality in a Cyclone.**—On July 27, 1947, we had a cyclone in Davenport and nearby areas that caused a great deal of damage. I took a field trip right after the storm to discover the effect of the high wind and hard rain on the bird life of Scott County. I found a dead immature Robin that was killed in some manner. I found two nestling Rose-breasted Grosbeaks that had been killed. These two birds would have left the nest in a few more days. One of the nestlings had almost all of its wing and tail feathers torn out, and the same was true of the other nestling but the wind also tore feathers out of other body regions. I visited a city park which is a favorite roosting place for many English Sparrows. I found a total of 78 of these birds killed by the storm—3 males, 70 females, and five of undetermined sex.—JAMES HODGES, Davenport, Iowa.

**Cinnamon Teal at Wall Lake.**—On March 28, 1946, a male Cinnamon Teal (*Querquedula cyanoptera*) was observed with a small flock of Blue-winged Teal (*Querquedula discors*) off the east shore of Wall Lake, Wright County, Iowa. A Cinnamon Teal was again observed at Wall Lake on April 9; this time, with a male Blue-winged Teal, it was courting a female teal in a small opening in the emergent vegetation around a muskrat house on the northwest side of the lake. The courtship was repeatedly interrupted by fighting between the two males and occasionally by pursuit flights lead by the female. The male Cinnamon Teal was more aggressive in the fighting, chasing the male Blue-winged Teal from the vicinity of the female again and again, but the Blue-winged Teal returned with great persistence. A similar combination of courting teal was seen at the same location again on April 16 and 18. On April 18 the Cinnamon Teal male appeared to be even more energetic in driving the male Blue-winged Teal away from the female, frequently forcing the Blue-wing to take flight. The female teal could not be identified, but we were agreed that it was noticeably darker in color than other female teal in the vicinity. No Cinnamon Teal was observed at Wall Lake after April 18.—THOMAS G. SCOTT, CECIL P. HAIGHT and THOMAS S. BASKETT, Iowa Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, Ames, Iowa.

**Whistling Swans at Goose Lake.**—About 20 large white birds were seen on April 11, 1947, near the center of the more open part of Goose Lake, near Jewell, Hamilton County, Iowa. The birds were facing into a fairly strong northwest wind and had arranged themselves in a line across the direction of the wind. Time did not permit close observation of the birds at that time, but they were thought to have been swans. At daybreak on April 12, 1947, a special effort was made to observe the large white birds more closely, and eight of them were found in a shallow bay on the northwest side of the marsh. The suspected identity proved correct; they were swans. By careful stalking it was possible to get within about 30 yards of where the birds appeared to be



standing on one leg in the shallow water. Each seemed to be asleep with its head beneath a wing, excepting when interrupted by some disturbing element. One cause of disturbance was a Coot (*Fulica americana*) feeding on the lee side of one of the swans. The Coot appeared to occasionally peck the under tail coverts of its large associate. This usually caused the swan to withdraw its head from beneath the wing and extend it toward the Coot in a menacing gesture. The Coot would swim off, but gradually move back to its former position beside the large bird.

Further attempts to stalk the swans finally alerted them, and they swam to the open water of the lake. They finally took to flight, quartering into the wind and then circling to gain height. During this turn they could be heard "talking" in a soft musical note. Although we were not familiar with the calls of the Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) there was certainly nothing horn-like about the notes of these swans. They left the lake, flying in an irregular flock toward the west at a higher level than any of the ducks in flight. It is probably safe to identify these birds as Whistling Swans (*Cygnus columbianus*), largely because of the restricted range and number of the Trumpeter Swans.—THOMAS G. SCOTT and MARGARET J. SCOTT, Iowa Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, Ames, Iowa.

**A Ruffed Grouse Nest.**—South of Waterloo, the northwest township of Allamakee County, is Hanover, the roughest township in the county. Across it from southwest to northeast the Upper Iowa River flows in great oxbow loops between precipitous cliffs 300 feet high. Tributary to it are valleys of perennial spring-fed brooks and dry runs. The bluff sides of both the river valley and those of the tributaries are largely covered with trees and brush, while the uplands are cultivated fields. This is good habitat for grouse.

On May 9, 1947, we were retracing the survey line of an old abandoned road that ran diagonally down the north side of a not-so-steep bluff south of a spring brook. This slope was covered with brush and scattered oak, basswood, poplar, birch and cherry trees of all sizes, and many rotten logs. In chaining one of the courses, I passed within 3 feet of a sitting Ruffed Grouse and she went whizzing off through the woods and alighted in the brush not far off. She left a nest full of eggs behind. A large limb broken off an old white oak lay, supported by its smaller limbs, about a foot above the ground. Directly under this in an accumulation of dead leaves was the nest. It was further protected by a few smaller limbs and a couple of young trees, and thus escaped trampling by the half-wild, young cattle pastured there. As she flew off, she scattered leaves over the nest with her wings and the eggs were partly concealed. With a small stick we removed enough leaves to enable us to count the eggs. There were 14—a nestful of beautiful, clean, brownish-buff, unspotted eggs.

I visited the place again a week later, this time with my camera. I stopped within 5 feet of the nest but did not immediately flush the bird. Her protective coloration was so perfect that for a few seconds I failed to differentiate the closely sitting bird from the surrounding leaves. It was perhaps ten seconds before she scrambled off and went trailing her wings, acting as if she were badly crippled and making queer noises. But I did not follow her and at about five rods she took to wing. I photographed the nest and eggs.

We finished our survey of the road that day and I had no further opportunity to visit the nest. Perhaps it was just as well, as too much attention might have caused it to be abandoned. On the afternoon and night of May 28

we had a fall of from 7 to 9 inches of wet, heavy snow. As the grouse might have brought off her brood by that time, I was concerned lest they perish. By the next afternoon, however, the snow was largely gone, and the wise mother bird doubtless knew how to care for her little ones.—ELLISON ORR. Waukon, Iowa.

#### RECENT BIRD BOOKS

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS, by Roger Tory Peterson (Houghton Mifflin Co., 3rd Edition, Boston, 1947; cloth, 12mo, pp. i-xxiv & 1-290, 60 pls., numerous text figs. & silhouettes—1000 illustrations, 511 in color; price, \$3.50).

This revision of our standard field guide to the identification of birds will be welcomed by all who are interested in ornithology, from the sentimental bird lover to the serious student. As in former editions, primary emphasis has been placed on field marks for outdoor identification, but important additions have been made which enhance its value as a pocket guide. Attention is directed to flight patterns by the printing of plates showing most water birds, shore birds, gallinaceous birds, hawks and some land birds in flight. Another excellent feature, one which will be of great value to banders and which we have long wished for, is the use of plates depicting the confusing fall plumages of some species, especially shore birds and warblers. Altogether this field guide is one of the most worth-while and worth-having books on ornithology that has been published in many years.—C. J. S.

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Dr. Warren N. Keck, the Union's Librarian and a former President of the organization, recently terminated many years of service as a teacher at Coe College, Cedar Rapids, and has accepted a similar position at North Central College, Naperville, Illinois. We wish him success in his new school.

Dr. Harold Ennis attended the American Ornithologists' Union meeting at Toronto, Canada, September 9 to 11, and was the only Iowa ornithologist present. He reports a very fine meeting and a fine time. His mother, Mrs. Edna Ennis of Tama, accompanied him. The 1948 meeting of the A. O. U. is to be held at Omaha next October.

Many members of the Iowa Union call at the Editor's home during the year, coming by train, bus, automobile, bicycle or even hitch-hiking. On September 28, I. C. Adams, Jr., Columbia, Missouri ornithologist, arrived by airplane. He piloted his plane and landed in a field adjacent to the Pierce farm.

#### THE CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS

Our September issue is late, and it is possible that the December issue will also be late, so it seems desirable to mention the Christmas census at this time. We repeat the instructions given last year. The Christmas bird census will be taken as usual between December 20 and 30. Study the form of censuses published in previous March issues and follow details carefully. List birds in the A. O. U. order, giving exact number seen, and include data on hours, weather and ground conditions. Our spring and Christmas census reports have been criticised because in group lists the name of the observer of an unusual bird is seldom given, and it is impossible to tell who saw what bird. Since this practice very seriously impairs the scientific value of the list, we urge contributors to give the name of the person or persons who observed the unusual species. Send your list to the Editor of 'Iowa Bird Life' not later than January 15.



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